

He encouraged black college students to continue their sit-in protests and freedom rides. In 1963, Dr. King led mass demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, where the demonstrators were met with violent opposition, getting the interest and attention of then-President John F. Kennedy who responded, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed. Dr. King became Time Magazine's Man of the Year in 1963 and the recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. In 1967, he also initiated a poor people's campaign designed to confront economic problems that were not addressed under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Dr. King's life of peace and change was suddenly ended on April 4, 1968, as he was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

Mr. Speaker, our Nation's capital makes history alive. Without having a memorial to Dr. King and the civil rights movement, it sends the message that this part of history is not still alive. As Dr. King once told his children, "I'm going to work and do everything that I can do to see that you get a good education. I don't ever want you to forget that there are millions of God's children who will not and cannot get a good education, and I don't want you feeling that you are better than they are. For you will never be what you ought to be until they are what they ought to be." Our country will never be what it ought to be until we value and adequately display the contributions of African Americans who have made tremendous contributions to our history; and, of course, a tribute to Dr. King on the Mall would go a long way in that direction.

Ms. WATSON. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of S. 470, to extend the authority for the construction of a memorial to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on the National Mall. The House bill, H.R. 1821, was passed on September 23, 2003 by a voice vote under unanimous consent.

The authorization set by Congress in 1996 to raise funds for the memorial will expire on November 12, 2003. Passage of the Senate bill will allow the legislation to be sent directly to the President for signing and extend the authorization through November 12, 2006.

The efforts of the King Memorial Foundation to raise \$100 million for the construction and maintenance of the project have been impressive, but more time is needed to reach its fundraising goal. I believe that it is our job as members of Congress to ensure that Dr. King will be memorialized in a distinguished manner that acknowledges his legacy. Congress therefore must authorize more time for funds to be raised to build the King Memorial.

Our National Mall is representative of the profound history and strength of our Nation. Dr. King is one of our Nation's most important leaders, and this monument should carry the same weight and significance as those erected in honor of other distinguished Americans.

Congressional leaders also support the efforts to put Dr. King's legacy at Washington's forefront. They along with several other of my colleagues sit on a honorary bipartisan congressional committee for the Martin Luther King Jr. National Memorial.

Dr. King's teachings of non-violent civil disobedience to combat segregation and racial inequality affected not only minorities, but every religious, ethnic, and social group in our Nation. In 1963, Dr. King led the March on Washington very near the site where we wish to honor him today. His leadership was critical to the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Dr. King acted on his dream for America and was successful in making the United States a better place. We must ensure that Dr. King's valiant efforts will be remembered by future generations.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in keeping Dr. King's dream alive by honoring him among our Nation's finest.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the Senate bill, S. 470.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the Senate bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### EXPRESSING SENSE OF CONGRESS REGARDING SANCTIONS ON NATIONS THAT ARE UNDERMINING EFFECTIVENESS OF CONSERVATION MEASURES FOR ATLANTIC HIGHLY MIGRATORY SPECIES

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 268) expressing the sense of the Congress regarding the imposition of sanctions on nations that are undermining the effectiveness of conservation and management measures for Atlantic highly migratory species, including marlin, adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas and that are threatening the continued viability of United States commercial and recreational fisheries, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. CON. RES. 268

Whereas some fishing vessels of members and nonmembers of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (hereinafter referred to as the "Commission") that fish in the Commission regulatory area have not conformed with Commission recommendations for some stocks, including those promoting the live release of Atlantic marlin;

Whereas repeated nonconformance with Commission recommendations by fishing vessels of Commission members and nonmembers undermines the effectiveness of the Commission to establish, maintain, and enforce conservation measures, including rebuilding plans for overfished species of fish that are under the Commission's management authority;

Whereas failure of Commission members to enforce Commission conservation and man-

agement measures, including reductions in Atlantic marlin landings, threatens the continued viability of United States commercial and recreational fishing industries and undermines conservation goals;

Whereas the Commission has adopted a resolution that further defines the scope of illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing activities by large-scale longline vessels in the Commission regulatory area; and

Whereas such resolution includes provisions directing Commission members and cooperating nonmembers to take every possible action, consistent with relevant laws, to prevent the engagement in transaction and transshipment of tunas and tuna-like species from vessels that engage in illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing activities, including vessels that engage in any fishing that is not in compliance with relevant Commission conservation and management measures; Now, therefore, be it

*Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of Congress that—*

(1) The President should, consistent with statutory authorities and international obligations—

(A) direct the United States Commissioners to the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (in this resolution referred to as the "Commission") to seek the establishment of effective conservation, management, and enforcement measures for the species under consideration at the 2003 Commission meeting, including for Atlantic marlin;

(B) continue to encourage members and nonmembers that fish in the Commission regulatory area to make every effort to end illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing, including any fishing that is not in conformance with relevant conservation recommendations adopted by the Commission, including those concerning Atlantic marlin landing reductions;

(C) make full use of all appropriate diplomatic mechanisms, relevant international laws and agreements, and other appropriate mechanisms to ensure conformance with conservation recommendations for all species under the Commission's management authority, including Atlantic marlin; and

(D) continue to encourage the Commission to adopt conservation recommendations authorizing the use of enforceable measures to prevent those who fish in the Commission regulatory area from taking actions that would undermine the effectiveness of conservation and management recommendations of the Commission;

(2) when the vessels of a country are being used in the conduct of fishing operations in the Convention area in a manner or in such circumstances as would tend to diminish the effectiveness of the conservation recommendations of the Commission, the President and the Secretary of Commerce, consistent with their statutory authorities and international obligations, should—

(A) exercise their authorities under the Atlantic Tunas Convention Act of 1975 (16 U.S.C. 971 et seq.); and

(B) exercise their authorities under the provisions of the Commission's rules that ensure conformance with Commission recommendations by member and nonmembers; and

(3) if nationals of a Commission member or nonmember, directly or indirectly, are conducting fishing operations in a manner or under circumstances which diminish the effectiveness of the Commission's fishery conservation programs, then the Secretary of Commerce, consistent with international obligations, should certify that fact under section 8(a)(1) of the Fishermen's Protective Act of 1967 (22 U.S.C. 1978 (a)(1)).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the concurrent resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

H. Con. Res. 268 is a resolution expressing the sense of Congress regarding the imposition of sanctions on nations that are undermining the effectiveness of conservation and management members for Atlantic highly migratory species.

Madam Speaker, the annual meeting of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, known as ICCAT, will take place in a few weeks. The United States delegation must go into this meeting with a strong position that noncompliance by nations that are members of ICCAT is unacceptable. The U.S. has been a world leader in pushing for conservation measures at ICCAT. In addition, we have put restrictions on our fishermen, both recreational and commercial, to implement these international conservation measures.

□ 1630

Again and again, the U.S. has restricted our fishermen and then had to watch as foreign nations allowed their fishermen to break the internationally agreed upon rules.

Not only have our fishermen suffered as a result of noncompliance by other nations, but the fish themselves have suffered. Atlantic white marlin populations, in particular, are at approximately 12 percent of their historic levels. Blue marlin are at about 40 percent of their historic levels. This is totally unacceptable, and, I might add, unnecessary.

Despite playing by the rules and pushing for conservation, the U.S. fishermen were faced with a petition last year to list white marlin under the Endangered Species Act. Rebuilding plans for both white marlin and blue marlin have been put in place, but international fleets do not comply.

It is clear that U.S. conservation efforts are not enough. Our fishermen, both recreational and commercial, played by the rules and were still almost shut down because of international indifference.

We need to make sure that all nations that fish for Atlantic highly-migratory species play by the rules, or

face the consequences. The U.S. is one of the biggest markets for these nations, and we should send a strong signal that we will not tolerate continued noncompliance.

This resolution urges the President to continue to work with our trading partners through the international fisheries management bodies to achieve conservation goals. In addition, the resolution calls on the President, when those international efforts do not work, to use all methods available, including trade sanctions against those countries which choose not to play by the internationally agreed upon rules.

This resolution sends the message to those nations that do not consider conservation to be important that there must be consequences to their actions. In addition, it sends the message to U.S. fishermen that their conservation efforts are consequential, and not for nothing.

I urge Members to support this resolution and to send the U.S. delegation to ICCAT with the task of warning other nations that they need to take conservation seriously.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I join my colleague in support of H. Con. Res. 268.

Madam Speaker, the United States has long been a leader in promoting the sustainable harvest of our ocean resources. Unfortunately, not all other countries have been as diligent. We must continue to press for effective conservation and management of our world's fisheries, not only at the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, or ICCAT, but at all international fisheries organizations.

This concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 268, gives much-needed support to our U.S. commissioners as they enter into yet another round of difficult international negotiations. Ending illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, not only of white marlin but all the species managed by ICCAT, is necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of these fisheries and the United States commercial and recreational industries that depend on them.

I commend my colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), for this timely resolution, and I urge the House to adopt it.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the ranking member of the subcommittee, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE).

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to offer my support for H. Con. Res. 268. International fisheries agreements, including the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas, ICCAT, are critical for healthy oceanic food webs, as well as a healthy economy. When fish stocks remain at severely depleted levels, ecosystem structure is altered, and millions of dollars in revenue are lost every year.

We learned in multiple hearings in the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, over the last several years, that the Atlantic white marlin stock is in the worst shape of all the species managed by ICCAT. Illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing further aggravates this problem by undermining market prices to a point that our law-abiding commercial fishermen can no longer afford to fish and by forcing noncommercial fishermen to be stringently regulated.

After 40 years of ICCAT management, the Commission has achieved the dubious distinction of allowing two-thirds of the highly-migratory species it oversees to become overfished. The lack of compliance by ICCAT contracting members with ICCAT's own recommendations considerably limits this Commission.

If United States fishermen are expected to adhere to national and international laws while maintaining an economically viable industry, our administration must be willing to take a strong position in support of internationally enforceable recommendations. I have high hopes that this resolution will provide a thorough debate at next month's ICCAT meeting.

I just want to commend my colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), for this timely resolution. I am proud to be a cosponsor. I urge that the House adopt this resolution.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA).

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding me time.

Madam Speaker, certainly I would like to express my appreciation for the outstanding leadership of our colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), as the chief sponsor of this legislation, not only as the former chairman of our Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, but always a chief spokesman for the needs of the fisheries programs of our Nation.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 268, a resolution expressing the sense of congress regarding the imposition of trade sanctions against countries who undermine the effectiveness of the International Convention on the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas. The International Commission was established

in 1969 and is responsible for the conservation of some 30 species of tuna, swordfish and many other times of highly-migratory fish.

Thirty-six years ago, the United States demonstrated its leadership in marine conservation by being the first to sign the international convention. Later that year, we were joined by two other countries, Japan and South Africa. Today, the number of contracting and cooperating parties has grown to 39 nations from across the world, signifying a global recognition of the importance of a large-scale collective effort to protect and carefully manage our international fisheries.

Madam Speaker, the ICCAT Commission is charged with the lofty responsibility of undertaking scientific research, compiling statistics and monitoring a large number of highly-migratory species that inhabit the vast Atlantic Ocean. The types of species under the Commission's purview of diverse, having varying biological characteristics, migration patterns and exploitation pressures from different countries, which makes effective management very complicated.

The Commission directs much effort in devising plans and providing recommendations that establish acceptable fishing levels aimed at ensuring maximum sustainable catches for all. Since their establishment some 33 years ago, the Commission has been working hard to provide accurate information and management advice to fishing countries of the world, with the number of recommendations growing exponentially each year.

Despite the Commission's considerable efforts, however, several Atlantic highly-migratory species are still in jeopardy. The Atlantic white marlin, a major sport fishery for the United States, is nearly at an endangered status, and not from U.S. sports fishermen. An estimated 95 percent of the Atlantic marlin catches come from other nations, both from targeted fishing, and, sadly, as bycatch.

I have always had very strong feelings about the issue of bycatch. It is inconceivable, Madam Speaker, to me, that some find it acceptable to simply throw out these fish, just because there is no perceived market value for them. Perhaps my point of view on this stems from my heritage as an islander, whose way of life, means of nourishment and culture centers almost exclusively on the resources from the ocean, considers the discard of any fish as a despicable waste.

Madam Speaker, illegal, unreported and unregulated, which is known as IUU, fishing, is also of great concern to me. Countries who engage in such fishing significantly compromise the ability to monitor fish stocks accurately, making it very difficult for the Commission to advise on setting catch limits. IUU fishing is a serious concern to the Atlantic species, as well as to the fisheries of the great Pacific Ocean.

The most unfortunate fact, in my opinion, Madam Speaker, is that even

some of the contracting member countries have continually violated the convention to which they themselves have signed. Brazil, China, Cote D'Ivoire and Spain continue to overfish Atlantic white marlin, and even the European Union refuses to accept the recommendations by the Commission for Atlantic blue tuna catch limits. These practices are unfair to the rest of the participating nations who fully cooperate and value the Convention and actively support international conservation efforts. They are unfair to and disrespectful to the internationally-recognized ICCAT Commission, and they are unfair to our future generations that will continue to rely on our ocean resources for food.

Madam Speaker, I fully support the imposition of trade sanctions on these countries that violate and undermine the convention. Repeatedly, we have seen laws, rules, and regulations ignored because there is no means to effectively enforce them. Perhaps sanctions are the "teeth" the U.S. can give the convention so that violating countries will begin to take marine conservation seriously.

I am a proud cosponsor of this resolution and may even propose a similar resolution for the Pacific fisheries at the appropriate time, as we have many similar issues there as well.

I thank my good friends and colleagues on the Committee on Resources, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON), the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE), and the chairman of our subcommittee, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. GILCHREST) for their leadership on this issue, and I urge Members to support this resolution.

I even suggested, Madam Speaker, that we ought to extend our EE zone from 200 to 1,000 miles, to make a point of the fact that our country is the only country that is sincerely making every effort to see that when we say conservation, we mean it sincerely, and not just a lot of rhetoric.

Madam Speaker, I do want to thank my staff, Dr. Malia Rivera, a Sea Grant fellow in my office, for the outstanding job she has done in advising me on issues pertaining to fisheries, and again I thank my good friend from New Jersey, and I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I would just conclude by saying this, that in our country, many years ago when our country was young, our forefathers enjoyed a huge herd of buffalo in the Midwest States, and because we did not understand that they would not always just be there, we carried out practices that simply eliminated them.

Unfortunately, because of the international pressure that is being placed

on these species by the international pelagic longline fleet and the lack of enforcement of agreed upon ICCAT regulations, the same process is currently under way with white marlin, blue marlin, swordfish, Atlantic tuna and other species.

This is a crime which, in my view, must stop, and I do not use the term "crime" unadvisedly.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. SAXTON. I yield to the gentleman from American Samoa.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, again, to make the point in the course of our hearings, with due respect to the members of the administration that testified before our hearing that was held, they are making every sincere effort to get other countries and members of the convention to comply, but how long have we been doing this? This is for the past 10 years, from previous administrations. We are still making every sincere effort, but it seems with no real substantive results.

I ask my good friend, the gentleman from New Jersey, what else can we do? As I suggested earlier, we need to put teeth on the substance of this convention, or else we are just going to be spinning our wheels for another 10-year period, and still with no results.

Here is the problem: We now have fishing vessels from the Atlantic fishing in the Pacific. Why? Because some of these fish have been overfished. There are moratoriums placed on them.

We have serious problems, even in the Pacific. Fifty-four percent of the tuna now caught in the world is from the Pacific Ocean, and this is just tuna. The fact is that if we are not taking seriously the substantial of the problems of conservation of various species of fish, we definitely are going to have some very serious problems.

I thank the gentleman for his expressing the concerns about the fishing, but I ask my good friend, we have been spinning our wheels for the last 10 years, are we going to be doing the same thing for the next 10 years?

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, reclaiming my time, I thank the gentleman for making the eloquent point that he has.

□ 1645

The question is a very good one. That is what this piece of legislation, this resolution is about. It says that, in effect, if the parties who go to ICCAT and make an agreement on the amount, the number, or the amount of tonnage of fish to be taken do not comply with those agreements, then the President is urged to use trade sanctions with regard to fish or other commodities to enforce those agreements, or to provide a penalty against those who do not comply with the agreements that their countries make. It is a huge problem and one that I hope that this resolution will give the administration the necessary muscle that it needs to solve this problem.

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Madam Speaker, if the gentleman would again yield, and I thank him for yielding, and I sincerely hope that perhaps, even after expressing the sense of the Congress in our resolution, that maybe the next phase is to put in teeth by saying by statute that we do this. Because again, despite all of the good efforts that perhaps the administration may be making on this issue, it is not just from this administration, but even from previous administrations, I think we are tired of the rhetoric. It is time to now put teeth in this issue and make sure that if we are going to be the only Nation complying with the substance of the convention while the others can still do what they want, I think there is a tremendous inequity in this effort.

Again, I thank the gentleman for bringing this point to the attention of our colleagues.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman from American Samoa for making the point so clearly.

Madam Speaker, I have no further speakers at this time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. CAPITO). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 268, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds having voted in favor thereof) the rules were suspended and the concurrent resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### EXTENDING THE TERM OF THE FOREST COUNTIES PAYMENTS COMMITTEE

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3249) to extend the term of the Forest Counties Payments Committee.

The Clerk read as follows:

H.R. 3249

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. EXTENSION OF TERM OF FOREST COUNTIES PAYMENTS COMMITTEE.

Effective as of October 11, 2003, section 320(e) of the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2001 (Public Law 106-291; 114 Stat. 994; 16 U.S.C. 500 note), is amended by striking "three years after the date of the enactment of this Act" and inserting "on September 30, 2007".

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON) and the gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Mrs. CHRISTENSEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SAXTON).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members

may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the bill under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New Jersey?

There was no objection.

Mr. SAXTON. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, this bill, H.R. 3249, simply changes the termination date of the Forest Counties Payments Committee that was created by Congress in the Interior Appropriations Act of 2001 to coincide with the expiration date in 2006 of the Secure Rural Schools and Communities Self-Determination Act of 2000.

The purpose of this committee is to develop recommendations for Congress concerning the Federal program of payments to States and counties and to evaluate the effectiveness of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act that regulates those payments. While some of the work of the committee has been completed, the important job of evaluating the effectiveness of Public Law 106-393 is ongoing and will need to be continued in order to assist Congress as it reviews options for either reauthorization or the development of new legislation. These efforts are crucial if we hope to further our understanding and support for healthy communities and healthy forests.

Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. WALDEN) for his thoughtful leadership on this issue and on this bill. I urge adoption of the bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

(Mrs. CHRISTENSEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Madam Speaker, H.R. 3249 extends the term of the Forest Counties Payments Committee until September 30, 2007. This date coincides with the expiration date of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. The committee, whose term expired on October 11, 2003, is to provide recommendations concerning Federal payments to States and counties in which public lands are situated. The bill is noncontroversial, and we do not object to it.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the two gentlemen from Oregon, the sponsor of the bill, (Mr. WALDEN), and our Democratic colleague (Mr. DEFAZIO) for bringing this legislation to the floor.

Mr. WALDEN of Oregon. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3249—a bill I introduced with my colleague from Oregon, Mr. DEFAZIO, which would extend the term of the Forest Counties Payments Committee. I want to commend the chairman of the Resources

Committee, Mr. POMBO, and the Chairman of the Agriculture Committee, Mr. GOODLATTE, for expediting the consideration of this legislation in their respective committees.

Madam Speaker, H.R. 3249 would extend the term of the Forest Counties Payments Committee to coincide with the sunset of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000, which expires on September 30, 2007. The committee was created in the FY 2001 Interior Appropriations bill and is comprised of local government county and school officials. Its purpose was to develop long-term solutions to ensure the proper management of our national forests, emphasizing forest health and economic activity, and evaluate the effectiveness of the County Schools legislation.

Congress charged the committee with evaluating several key areas in making its recommendations. They include the methods by which payments are made to eligible states and counties; the impact of revenues from historical multiple use of federal lands on states and counties; the economic environmental, and social benefits of federal lands to counties and reviewing the costs to counties resulting from the presence of federal lands. The committee held at least six listening sessions throughout the country to understand better the impact that the presence of these federal lands has on counties where they are located. The input gathered from these listening sessions was ultimately used to write the committee's report, which was published in February 2003.

What did the committee's report find? It found what many communities in my district have known for at least the last decade: that the decline in timber receipts from federal lands has had a devastating economic impact on these rural communities. While communities acknowledge the benefits associated with the presence of public lands within their counties, including improved quality of life, recreational opportunities, and the revenue coming into their communities through travel and tourism, the committee validated the claims that these benefits are outweighed by the degradation of county roads and schools that has resulted from the decline in timber receipts. This not only creates access issues for individuals wishing to recreate on public lands, but also creates safety concerns for transporting children to schools, responding to emergencies and day-to-day travel.

This unfortunate reality especially holds true in the counties I represent in eastern Oregon. Between 1990–1999 the counties in this region saw Forest Service payments from timber receipts and other generated revenues drop by 87 percent.

In light of the rapid decline of timber receipts reaching these communities, Congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000. This act stabilized timber revenue dependent counties by providing a temporary "safety-net" payment to forest counties and schools at 85 percent of the average of their three highest receipt years from 1986–1999. The legislation also provided an additional 15 percent to support community-based projects, like hazardous fuels treatments taking place on federal lands.

Madam Speaker, the authorization for the Forest Counties Payments Committee expired several weeks ago, on October 11, before it was able to examine fully the impact of the